

Text of March 8, 2005 e-mail sent on behalf of Human Services Secretary Cindy LaWare

Richard Hillyard
Ward One Neighbor Planning Assembly
Burlington, Vermont

Dear Mr. Hillyard,

I am writing to request an opportunity to appear before the Ward One NPA at your April meeting to discuss the preliminary work surrounding a possible new psychiatric hospital capacity at Fletcher Allen, and to begin the community engagement process to hear your questions, concerns and advice.

The State of Vermont has begun developing a continuum of mental health services in connection with our plans to close the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury. These new or expanded services will include community supports to assist people in avoiding the necessity of being hospitalized, community recovery residences for people who are ready to leave the hospital but not yet well enough to return home, and new inpatient care in several locations, including one primary location. A primary inpatient facility located at Fletcher Allen, if it proves possible, would be a major component in this effort.

In addition, the State will be moving the health lab out of the building at East and Colchester avenues and would make this property available. The possibilities of building a new structure on that site or adding the site to the Fletcher Allen green space have not yet been fully evaluated.

The idea of building on or near the Fletcher Allen is a concept at this stage, and not yet a proposal. We are in the process of gathering information about the number of beds needed and the feasibility of possible sites, to inform a proposal for discussion. We are taking steps to engage Ward One and other Burlington neighbors early in this process, however, so that any proposal that emerges is influenced by the needs and insights of the community.

We would greatly appreciate 20 minutes on your next meeting agenda to provide an update on this work, and we would like to hear your feedback and to take your questions.

We will be providing additional information to you and to the people of Burlington in the coming weeks and months, and are developing a formal way to learn about the community needs and concerns. We also welcome any thoughts or ideas you have as we develop this process and move forward.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia D. LaWare